1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

181 is pre-eminently a social phenomenon: it obtains essentially
527 during festivals, which are community events; it derives from
[535] a festive atmosphere, which only the assembled community can create; and it reaches its community-centered peak as throngs of men and women form a large dancing circle, men and women alternating so that each one has a member of the opposite sex on each side, hands joined together. While I am sensible of anthropological naïveté, the remarks and demeanor of the Santal on such occasions leave little doubt that such performances are a potent source as well as a reflection of community solidarity. During and just after such dancing there is generally great camaraderie, and everyone exchanges cigarettes and rice beer while moving about from one house to another.

527 Although it is above all village solidarity which such festivals
628 enhance and reflect, they also draw together the members of a particular village and Santal from as far as thirty miles away. The Santal are aware of the attraction of the drums and in many regions festivals are celebrated at slightly different times by nearby villages so that one can participate in several, and
181 so that reciprocity becomes possible. "Pleasure," as the Santal
619 understand the term, is a shared understanding which creates
648 immediate bonds with co-tribals wherever they may be from, and, like many other more official boundary-marking symbols of solidarity, also binds the Santal to the neighboring Mundari tribes; it is not uncommon to find some members of several of these tribes participating in any particular Santal festival. To
[273] be sure it is also possible to see drunken men quarreling at a
[578] Santal festival, and other signs of discord, but this will be discussed later.

619 The Santal origin myth validates the kinship ties between all Santal and thereby provides a basis for such unity as the Santal

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

63
184 variation and specialization do exist even though there are few sharp boundary lines. There is one regular social event
224 which reflects and intensifies regional cultural and social inter-
628 connection; this event is an annual hunt followed by a large all-male gathering outside some village where performances largely humorous and/or "obscene" (in their eyes as well as mine) take place. The participants consist of teams generally from several villages within a vicinity, and they compete with other similarly constituted teams for the favor of the assembled
[273] throng. Like many such gatherings, it terminates with rice beer.

In most of the territory occupied by the southern Santal, game is so scarce that the hunting aspect of this yearly event has become *pro forma*. After the hunt and its rituals, the various teams proceed in a march-dance parade through different villages as they make their way toward the final gathering place
[534] where performances will be held. Vigorous drum-beating marks
[535] the progress of their procession, and the characteristic Santal male strutting in dance is particularly pronounced. Any game
[192] that has been shot is borne aloft on pole stretchers. The entire event is known as *Sendra*.

[692] Several of my informants as well as the literature maintain that serious discussions of Santal customs and even settling of disputes that have escaped solution within the judicial units occur after the hunt. This was not the case at the one *Sendra* I attended. However this may be, the *Sendra* remains the largest and territorially the widest gathering of Santal, sometimes bringing together more than a thousand Santal living within a radius of about fifty miles.

596 Still to be considered are the intertwined components of the
592 extended and nuclear family. The term "extended family" is unfortunately one which has often been used very loosely; it

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

Chapter 2 External Solidarity

000 The "likenesses" of a particular people not only contribute to internal bonds of solidarity, but by virtue of their distinctiveness may also serve as a barrier against assimilation in surrounding societies. The more distinctive these likenesses, the more inconsistent with the culture of the surrounding societies, the better they serve to preserve solidarity.

181 The chief traits which have divided the Santal from their predominantly Hindu neighbors are the "pleasure" complex mentioned earlier and the practices of cow sacrifice and beef eating. Among the practices associated with the pleasure complex the most conspicuous are public mixed dancing such as occurs at festivals and the drinking of rice beer, as well as its ritual use. The Hindus regard Santal mixed dancing as an orgy, although it is in fact no more promiscuous than Western mixed dancing and is certainly less sensuous than much of Hindu classical dancing. As for cow sacrifice and beef eating, the stringency of the Hindu attitude is well known; on many occasions armed force has been used to halt both. It is again significant that these distinctive traits are shared by the other

535 535 648 171

585

When they have anointed the bridegroom, they anoint his follower, and last of all they anoint the conductress of ceremonies. When they have again drunk two leaf-cups of beer each, they separate and go home. But from this day until the marriage is finished the young men and girls dance day and night. [302] [595]

After three days the time for going with the bridegroom comes. The father of the bridegroom then at cock-crow pours out one earthenware pot full of "intimation" beer, and calling the village headman and his deputy, the Jog Mañjhi and his deputy he gives them beer. [273]

While they are drinking, the village headman asks the bridegroom's father: Look here, what beer is this? We do not find the malted grain. "Malted grain" is a metaphorical word, viz., the explanation of the matter, why he has brought them there. The father of the bridegroom then says in reply: Help us to-day to follow the bridegroom, the day fixed has come. The village headman then says to the Jog Mañjhi: Do call the village people together. He sends the Godet, who brings all there. They give beer to all. The bridegroom's father says to the Jog Mañjhi: Please get hold of five men for me. He brings them, and the bridegroom's father says: Do bring food out for us the bridegroom's party, rice, curry, salt, and five pots of beer; when it is light we shall send forerunners in advance; and at the same time they take along one goat and one pot of beer, three half-seers of rice (if the bride-price is five rupees, then five half-seers of rice), three branches of the root of turmeric, tobacco, salt, and oil in a small earthenware vessel, the last mentioned things are obligatory presents, that is to say, they call them materials for offering to the bongas.

When the forerunners have had food, they take all the things mentioned along in advance. When they reach there, one of them goes to the house where the marriage is to be held. Here also they have set up a marriage-shed and have worked as in the bridegroom's village. The man says: How is it, Sir, we the forerunners have come. The bride's father then says to the Jog Mañjhi: Please show them where to stay. The Jog Mañjhi then takes the forerunners to where they have made sheds for the bridegroom's party. He gives them earthenware pots for water and cooking, a flat basket, wooden ladles, firewood, leaf-plates, and leaf-cups; thereupon he returns to the house of marriage.

After they have sent the forerunners off, the people of the bridegroom's village, men and women, go to have "water-marriage". The bridegroom's mother takes a flat basket along. In this there is sun-dried paddy, sun-dried rice, a bunch of dhubi grass, one egg, oil, and sindur and one ball of thread. The wife of the bridegroom's father's younger brother carries a sword, and his paternal aunt carries bow and arrows. Two anointing girls carry on their heads narrow-necked earthenware pots resting on pads of thread, having covered them up with clothes for the bride; these two pots they call omen-pots. A brother-in-law [604] [607]

2: Skreforud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

Those among the bridegroom's party who wish now go to the young people of the village and dance with them under the marriage-shed the whole night; they drum the dancing-drum and sing a good deal. The old men of the bridegroom's side say to the young men of their party, before they go to dance: Dance, young fellows, just dance, but don't touch anything; they impose fines. People who go in a bridegroom's party cannot flirt with the girls of the bride's village; if they do, they punish them very severely. On the other hand even if a young man of the bride's people flirt with the girls of the bridegroom's village, they do not make much of this. 585 [535] [534]

The next morning the Jog Mañjhi goes to the lodgings of the bridegroom's party and asks them: How is it, honoured bridegroom's party, have you had your midday-meal or not? They answer him: A while ago we have had our meal and been strengthened, and your portion we have kept for you; please be quick and send us off. They then give into his charge the big and the small earthenware pots and his five portions of food. Thereupon the bridegroom's party at once send some forerunners off in advance to their home. The Jog Mañjhi then conducts the bridegroom's party to the bride's home. The bridegroom's party dance in the street outside the bride's home.

The Jog Mañjhi thereupon goes in and says to the bride's parents: Please anoint the bride and the bridegroom with oil and turmeric; find me five young men to follow the bride, and one elderly duenna. The anointing girls anoint the bride and the bridegroom; they bring the followers of the bride and the old duenna. Then the Jog Mañjhi says: Well, let them eat and strengthen themselves. Thereupon they give the bride and the bridegroom and the bride's male followers and the old duenna food, and they eat.

Thereupon the Jog Mañjhi says to all these: Well, make yourselves ready, I shall bring the bride and the bridegroom out. While they are making themselves ready, the Jog Mañjhi says to the bride's parents: Please get me one wooden pestle, having covered the ferrule with leaves. They bring him this, and he gives it into the charge of the bride's brother. Now the Jog Mañjhi says to the bride's mother: Please arrange molasses and water in lotas and brass-cups and find a mat. The bride's mother answers him: We are all ready. Saying this she puts about one seer of paddy into a fold of the bride's cloth. The Jog Mañjhi then says: Why, where is the beer for the Mañjhi haram? They hand him this in a small pot with a cover. Taking this in his hand he says to them all: Come along, let us go out. While they are going out, the bride turns round and shakes the paddy that was put in a fold of her cloth out in the door-opening of the house, salutes it and goes away. Thereupon they go to the Mañjhi than. The bridegroom's party also go there together with the others.

The bridegroom's party are dancing, and the Jog Mañjhi pours out the beer as a libation to the dead Mañjhi haram. As he makes the libation to him, he makes an invocation: As is seen here, Mañjhi haram, I give thee, hand thee this for the sake of good-bye being [782]

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

VII. CONCERNING PLEASURE AND JOY

181 To forget care and anxiety we have pleasure and joy: Dancing, singing, drumming the
517 dancing-drum and the kettle-drum, blowing the flute and the horn, playing the fiddle, folk-tales, stories and conundrums, hunting in the forest, catching fish, and beer drinking. Also metaphorical speech will bring pleasure; but this is to tutor people, we use it mostly in connexion with serious work.

a. Singing and dancing.

533 We have very many kinds of dances, and in connexion with the separate dances we
535 also have songs. In connexion with dancing and singing we drum the dancing-drum and the kettle-drum, and we blow the flute. The names of our dances and songs are the following: lagṛẽ, dǫṅ, guluạri, ḍahar, baha, riṅjạ, bhinsạr, jhikạ, humṭi, guṅjạr, sǫhrae, lǫbǫe, and duṅgeṛ. Dances without songs: the sword dance, the Dom dance, and lạuṛiạ. And songs without dancing are: forest songs, marriage recitation songs, folk-tale songs, rice-planting songs, and dirges. We blow the horn, for pleasure, at the
534 Flower festival and during the hunt without any dancing. We play the fiddle with all songs. We make the flutes of hollow bamboo, called bar laṅga bamboo. The horn we make of the buffalo-cow's horn and of the horn of the buffalo, and also of the horn of the Black Buck. The fiddle they make of wood or of a pumpkin shell, and on this they put a string of catgut, only one, and having strung horse-tail hair on a bow they fiddle; on the hair of the fiddle bow they apply salga[1] raisin; then only it sounds. The kettle-drum they make of an iron frame which they cover with buffalo skin. The dancing-drum they make with a cylindrical earthenware frame and cover it with skin of goats, etc.

535 Lagṛẽ, guluạri, and humṭi they dance at any time, the flower dance only at the Flower festival; the sǫhrae, matwar, and guṅjạr dances they dance at the Sohrae festival; riṅjạ and bhinsạr they dance at the Karam festival; dǫṅ they dance at marriages and at the Chạṭiạr festivals; ḍahar they dance during the hot season, only girls; jhikạ they dance at the Chạṭiạr, the Dom dance at marriages; and pạk dǫn (the sword dance) and lạuṛiạ they dance at Sohrae and Sakrat, men only; lǫbǫe they dance at the Durga festival, and duṅgeṛ they dance when they spend the night at the

[1] Boswellia thurifera, Colebrooke.

hunt.

2: Skrefsrud M-S (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

hunt. The rice-planting songs they sing when planting rice in the rice-fields, without dancing; the folk-tale songs they sing sitting down during the hot season in the evening; and the forest songs young men and girls sing in the forest, and also during the Sohrae, metaphorically. Dirges they sing at the final funeral ceremonies; these they also call "crying songs".

Except in the sword dance, the lāurīā, and ḍahar (road) dances girls and young men dance together in all dances. When dancing the girls take hold of each other's hands, and the young men dance in front of and opposite to the girls, without taking hold of each other. Some young men will dance themselves alone while drumming the kettle-drum; some young men will, while drumming the dancing-drum, dance together with those who drum the kettle-drum; some young men blow the flute and dance at the same time, and some young men only dance, and they sing together with the girls. Young men and girls enjoy dancing very much; they dance the whole night, and during day-time they work; still because of their joy they do not feel tired. The old men and women do not warn the young people not to dance, rather they go to look at them, and when they feel drowsy and go home, they say to the young people, as they leave: Do stop now, otherwise you will be drowsy when you have to work to-morrow. The young people answer them: Well, we are stopping presently. Still they continue dancing, until they are done for. While they are dancing the Jog Mānjhi does not stay there either, the young people are there alone right up to the end. Having danced until cock-crow they lie down just a little.

Elderly men and women do not dance the lagṛē much, only now and then for a short while; but during the Chaṭiar, the Flower and the Karam festivals they dance. Any one who knows the jhikā, starts this, and they dance slowly and sing.

b. Beer drinking.

The real joy of old men is in the beer. When they have drunk themselves jolly tipsy, they start a thousand things, about the old country, about landlords and usurers, about dancing, singing and whatever it may be; then they laugh, they are rejoicing, they feel exceedingly well. If they become drunk, they lie down and sleep, and there is an end of their joy. Elderly women also drink a good deal. Formerly elderly women did not drink much, and young men and girls not at all. Nowadays all Santals drink very much, a great shame. Formerly no one drunk from a brass-cup; they used leaf-cups; nowadays they pour brass-cup after brass-cup down; still they are not satisfied. Formerly they did not drink Suṇḍi[1] beer, only now and then they would drink liquor. Nowadays many Santals are becoming paupers by drinking Suṇḍi beer. If they have no money they take paddy

[1] Low-caste Hindus, who brew beer, distill liquor, and sell it.

1796
[539]

Hearing the sound of the kettle-drum
You came, brothers-in-law;
Sit down on the gold-strapped bed.
We did nothing at all,
Brothers-in-law, as we are filled with joy.

One bowl tobacco,
Smoke this first, brothers-in-law,
It is a fine custom.
Drink at once one brass-cup water,
Brothers-in-law, a great enjoyment.

The country people answer[38]:

Cup after cup of beer, know this,
We have drunk, brothers-in-law,
Leaf-cup after leaf-cup of soup with the castrated goat.
We have not done or arranged anything for you,
Brothers-in-law, as we are filled with joy.

[535] Thereupon the young men of the village and the young men among the visitors dance the sword-dance in the village street outside the headman's house, and the people look on. When they have finished dancing, the visitors go away to their various villages, and the young people of the village wander about in the village street the whole night. Some of the young men and girls appropriate things; from house after house they take Taro[39], egg-plant fruits, beans, and tubers; with straw-rope they make two tiny bundles, and some of it they keep aside for themselves to eat. One bundle they hang up in the headman's door and one bundle in the Paranik's door. Then they sing:

[539]

Be careful coming out, Sir headman,
You might knock against the tubers and Taro and hurt yourself.

Give us, Sir headman, our ash-pot,
We shall cook and eat tubers and Taro.

The headman then brings one earthenware pot with beer out to the young men. Also in the house of the Paranik they get, by singing in the same way, one earthenware pot with beer. Both these pots of beer the young men and girls pour out and drink in the village street outside the headman's house, and they dance the whole night until dawn. When day dawns, the Jog Mahjhi and the Jog Paranik make the young men take up the

[38] In corrupt Bihari. [39] Arum Colocasia, Wild.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

796 When the young men and girls have finished dancing, they again go to the house of the Jog Mañjhi, to pass the night there. When it becomes dawn next day, the girls plaster the courtyard in the house of the Jog Mañjhi with cow-dung, they draw and bring water, and the young men collect and bring together the straw bundles put on the heads of the bullocks. This they thresh, and this and the paddy that they gathered at the final dancing and begging the Jog Mañjhi measures out to the girls, dividing it between them, to make rice. Thereupon the Jog Mañjhi gives the young men and girls their noon meal. When they have eaten, he gives them in charge in their respective homes. Now the Sohrae is at an end.

When the girls have made the paddy that the Jog Mañjhi measured out to them in rice, they bring it to him. Of this he brews beer. After some ten days he gathers all the people of the village in his house. He gives them this beer, and he gives food to the young men and girls. This beer they call the *chaṭiar* (social cleansing) beer of the young men and girls. By this beer the young men and girls are "eaten" back into society again; their exemption is ended, and the closed ears of the village people are also opened.

The Sakrat[37] is the last day of the month of Pus. On the day two days before this day they have a village council and talk together, saying: To-morrow we shall catch fish and crabs, the day after we shall have the Sakrat. Consequently next day they catch fish and crabs. On the day of the Sakrat they at cockcrow kill a fowl in every house. When they have prepared rice and curry and have returned from bathing, they eat the rice and flesh curry, curry of fish, and crabs or any other stuff. When the sun is up, the men go to hunt. They hunt in a near forest. They bring Sal-leaves home with them; they go to bathe and return. In the meantime the women have prepared flattened rice and cakes. This the men offer to the bongas in every house, they offer it to the ancestors, and they pour out beer as a libation to these and to Marañ buru. Thereupon they make invocations in the name of the Sakrat, like the invocations at other times. They eat the cakes and the flattened rice. When they have eaten, the Jog Mañjhi invites them to come along and shoot at a target. He cuts down a plantain tree or a ricinus tree and takes this along. In the open place at the end of the village street he fixes it in the ground. Now the village priest first shoots at the target post. After him all the village men shoot, until it is hit. Then when some one has hit it, the Jog Mañjhi goes and cuts the target post down with a battle-axe, and the Jog Mañjhi carries the one who hit it on his shoulder from there to the assembled people. And they both salute all the people, commencing from the village headman.

[526]

[535] Now the young men dance the sword-dance and make many kinds of show. When they have finished acting in this way, they return to the village. The target post that the Jog Mañjhi cut down two men carry along on their shoulders like an animal. All enter the

[192]

[37] Hindi *saṅkrānt*, the passage of the sun into a new sign.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

house of the village headman. This target post they call the headman's piece of huntmeat. The village headman gives them beer and flattened and parched rice. At this time the headman speaks, saying: As you were so many tenants, you felled the hateful enemy and saved me, otherwise he might have eaten me. 796

When they have drunk there, they move away to the house of the Parsnik. Here they also get flattened and parched rice and beer. From there, urging each other, they go here and there to hospitable people and drink beer. The young men and girls dance lagré in the village street outside the house of the village headman. When they have done dancing, they go to their respective houses to lie down and sleep. [535]

The Magh fowl they sacrifice in the month of Magh (middle of January to middle of February) for the sake of reaping the thatching grass. From every house they collect one half-seer of rice or bajra to brew beer. The Godet brews beer of this. The owner of the cow that trampled on the magic square in the Sohrae also brews one separate pot of beer. They brew beer in every house. On the day fixed the Godet collects one fowl and one half-seer of rice and salt and turmeric from every house. The Godet takes it all to the place at the water's edge where the village priest is to make the offering. The beer that the Godet has brewed, and the feast-beer of the owner of the cow that trampled on the magic square, this also the Godet takes to the place where the village priest is to offer. After having bathed in the water there the village priest comes up to the magic square and offers the fowls. He offers them to Mārāko, Jaher era, Marañ buru, Pargana, Gosāe era, and Mañjhi haram and to the bongas that have come up and have been met with along the boundary. He makes an invocation as on other occasions. When he has performed the sacrifices, they make a hash with rice of them and eat them; the beer they also drink. Some of the hash goes by customary right to certain people. The following get: the village headman and his deputy and the Godet, the Jog Mañjhi, the Jog Parsnik, the village priest, and the priest of the outskirts, the reapers of the thatching grass, the carters, the thatchers, the water drawers, the bringers of firewood and leaves, the cook, and the beer brewer, they all get one portion each; only the village priest and the priest of the outskirts get two portions each.

At this time they talk together; the village headman says: Well, Sirs, as is seen here at the end of the month of Magh, the thieves have a month of Magh, the farmers also have a month of Magh, the village headman and his deputy also have a month of Magh, servants and servant girls also have a month of Magh, consequently we have all got the month of Magh. Well, if any of you will become our village headman, I also give up my position in the month of Magh. The Parsnik, Jog Mañjhi, Jog Parsnik, Godet, the village priest, and the priest of the outskirts also speak in the same way, saying: We also, Sir, have reached the end of managing. Then the village tenants say: Also we, Sir, have reached the end, we give our riceland and grounds into your charge, Father headman, so

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS
MAYURBHANJ

the new corn with a similar prayer. The remainder of the millet, he takes home for himself.

The Millet Festival, called *Muchri*, exists in all its details in Mayurbhanj and is observed by the Santals there.

Gamah Purnima (August)

Side by side with these harvest-festivals, the Santals of Mayurbhanj observe *Gamah Purnima* on the full-moon of *Sravan* (August), when cows are fed with salt, *mohua* flowers, rice, the corrosive *bhela* fruit and a grass called *mutha*, their horns being copiously rubbed with oil. Thereafter, men and women dance round a Karam (*Adina Cordifolia*) branch, planted at the *akhra* (place for dance), a special *Karam* dance, and on the conclusion immerse it in water. Ancestors are also propitiated with offerings of rice-beer. The Santals observe the festival along with some of the Hindus. All wear new clothes and indulge in feasts and drinks, not forgetting to feed Brahmins and Vaishnavas.

Karam Pòròb (September-October)

This is a festival observed in September-October. The males of the village go after nightfall and cut a branch of a *Karam* tree (*Adina Cordifolia*,) which they fix in the village lane (*kulhi*) and round which the young people dance till morning, when the Karam branch is thrown into a tank.

Sr Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

pestilence and epidemics affecting the Santals may be got rid of; and they reply in their hypnotic spell, suggesting ways out of the problems. On the conclusion the village-priest asks the Santals impersonating the deities to leave the grove.

On the morning of the second day, called *Sarḍi*, the *Godet* collects rice and chicken from all the houses. If a dance is decided upon, men and women go to the *Jahérthan* (Holy Grove), dancing and singing all the way with cymbal and kettle-drum accompaniments with the *Naeke* (priest) at the head, carrying the things procured by him on the previous day together with a pot of rice-beer. Closely following the priest, goes a bachelor youth with an earthen pitcher. Thus they reach the Holy Grove and clean the spot with cow-dung. Now the priest reaps some paddy from a field he chooses, and offers them with the prayers we have noted while describing *Ianthar* festival in the other Santal areas. Fowls are sacrificed to the five gods, and the Boundary deity is propitiated by the priest at a separate place with offerings of rice-beer. All these over, the women return home. Men stay on and prepare the tribal dinner which they eat by the afternoon. The priest himself cooks near the shrine of Jahèr era. He offers the meal to the five deities of the grove and eats the lot himself.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

and sweet potatoes must be stolen from the houses of the villagers to be eaten with the Headman's share of rice-beer, and no sin attaches to it as during the *Nòstò Chòndrò* of the Hindus. Such thefts are called *Jagarna* in Mayurbhanj. The object of the custom lies in the Santal belief that those who steal on such occasions will never be prosecuted on charges of theft, nor will such householders thus victimised be robbed by real thieves, a second time.

The second day in Mayurbhanj, is the day for *Sarḍi*, when *Gohal Puja* takes place. In the morning, an interesting dance is executed round a *Karam* branch which is brought by two bachelor youths and planted on the ground, cleansed with cow-dung by the maidens of the tribe. Old women circle round the tree with earthen lamps and offerings of sun-dried rice. This is closely followed by merry dance by the men and women of the tribe, in different groups.

With the noon, people offer fowls and pigs to *Kalimata*, the presiding deity of the cow-shed and to the ancestors ; and then ceremonially wash their agricultural implements as plough-shares and yokes, and anoint them with powdered rice and vermilion. Now it is time for meal, when, the animals sacrificed are eaten at home ; and this over, by evening, one will find the Santals *en masse* near the *akhra* (the village dancing yard) engaged in their songs and

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

after offering it to the ancestor-spirits. Thus stimulated, the tribe indulges in a water-carnival, when fluids of sun-dried rice are showered by the men and women on one another, amidst a great hilarity, as they parade up and down the *kulhi* (village-lane). 796

The afternoon witnesses *Khuṇtau*, as seen in the Santal Parganas, when, mischievous cows and buffaloes are tied to posts and teased with treacle cakes. But an additional interest is provided at Mayurbhanj in the shape of a mask-dance when the Santals impersonate tigers, snakes and elephants. [231] [632] [535]

The programme terminates on the fourth day after a tribal dance from house to house ; and thereafter, the paddy from the *biṛas* prepared to decorate the cattle is stored, and rice-beer brewed from it is reserved to be drunk on a later occasion.

Mòkòr (Sakrat[1] Mid-January.)

The Santals of Mayurbhanj observe a ceremony on the last day of *Pous* (mid-January) along with

---

1 Dr. Campbell in his *Santali to English Dictionary*, while explaining *Sakrat Pòròb* says that it is a festival observed on the *last three days of the Hindu year*, (Italics are ours), making it, peasumably refer to an equivalent of Bengali *Chaitra Sankranti*. Most probably he is mistaken. Our version is also corroborated by Rev. Bodding who says, "Close upon Sohrae comes Sākrat which is held on the last day of the month of *Paus*." (Dt. Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, 1910, page 128). 796 114

31 Mukherjea O, Y-4,6 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

up the broom-stick. Mòntènko takes up the bow and arrow, while Maraṅ Buru, the pick-axe ; and the actor-deities then run to the grove followed by the young men. Jahèr era then sweeps the shrine, while the two others supervise. 796

At night, they return from the grove. The priest, with piteous lamentations takes back the insignias the deities wore. All then sit on mats. The three actor-deities are then given a handful of rice each as propitiation, and questioned about the auguries. This is followed by a general incantation of the gods. [782] [787]

Next, the priest washes their feet beginning with Jahèr era. The deities themselves do so mutually, and the headman, the drummer, the *Kabi* (the singer), all participate in the ceremony. The balance of the water is then thrown on all, amidst general jumps and yells. The priest then asks for the water-pot, and makes Jahèr era, Maraṅ Buru and Mòṇṛènko sit on the mats, when they are dispossessed of their spirit life. They are then entertained with a meal of rice and drinks of *hàṇḍia* (rice-beer) along with the others present. But a peculiar thing is that the *Kabi* (the singer) is allowed a large share of the dinner and not allowed to return home.

Dances *en masse* with special songs for the Baha follow. Many of these are duets. One runs [535] [533]

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

I entered the temple. 771
There I read the scriptures 533
And realised that the religion of the Santals 539
has come back. 178

We would like to conclude this review with a lesson conveyed by a folk-song: 533 539

Sojhe hòrdò Nupàl kucit giya,
Ḍhili sili Nupàl balaṅ taṛam
Etòm koye Nupàl jànum jhànṭi
Janhan lekatèlaṅ bàkuk' kòk'a.

(Translation)

The straight road is narrow, O Nupal!
We must not walk carelessly, O Nupal!
To its right and left are fences of thorns,
O Nupal!
By chance thorns may prick us.

Santal Dances

Here we intend to mark in some detail, the various Santal dances, their nature and characteristics. These dances are mostly executed by men and women together, although, as we shall soon see, there are special ones reserved for either of the sexes. The Santals have special seasons and festivals for these dances and these are a part and parcel of the tribal religious life. 535

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

Lagṛen ènèc'

535 This is the most common of Santal dances and may be held at any time, but a moon-light is the favourite occasion for it. When the moon glimmers, men beat the drums and *madals* to attract the youths and maids of the tribe by the music. Soon a sufficient number assembles at the spot; they then make a complete circle with a radius of seven to ten feet. The steps of the "Lagṛen" dance are regular all through. The feet, they wave forward making an angle of 45° (degrees) and swing to the right, while the circle appears to move in an anti-clock-wise direction.

Lagṛen dance

So they dance merrily for half-an-hour, when comes an interval. Now they sit and rest for about ten minutes. Some crack jokes, while men sing and

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

women reply in chorus. So they go on till about 3 a. m. in the morning. 535

It must be added, however, that "Lagren" is a very stimulating dance, and on these occasions the youths and maids of the tribe get plenty of opportunities for love-making. Even the steps of the dance provide facilities for courtship, as the couples face side-ways and talk as they dance. And after the dances, parties in love retire into the woods. 535 832

The songs, sung on these occasions, are mostly love-songs. An illustration is given here:— [533] [539]

Nadiaka dhare dhare
Kahar bansi baje,
Hai hai òntare kandiche.
Akhite dekhini, kanetò sunini,
Hai hai, amar òntare kandiche.

(Translation)

On the banks of the river,
Whose lute plays?
Alas! the heart weeps.
I haven't seen with eyes,
Nor heard with ears.
Alas, my heart weeps!

Nabin Mañjhi, Headman of Muruda, Mayurbhanj, said that when there are no rains, there are certain "Lagren" songs in invocation to the Rain- 533 731 782 789 [115]

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

533 731 782 789 [539] god, which are sung to make the skies yield rain. One such sample is quoted below: —

Svarager hur hur
Prithimite dhula chilu urilò
Dhaner sisò chilu marilò
Manuser chati chilu phatilò he.

(Translation)

In the sky, clouds rumble, Oh god!
On the earth, dust flies.
Oh god! the ears of corn dry up.
The hearts of men are breaking, Oh god!

Dòn ènèc'

• 535 [585] This is danced during marriages generally. Mixed men and women choose their groups and form a lively circle. The women interlock their hands gracefully, whereas, men with *Nagera* and *Madal* stand in the centre forming an inner circle. As the music continues, the dancers advance two steps to the right in a general motion. Next, they gracefully extend each feet forward. Thus they dance for twenty minutes or so, while women sing in unison. When the dance finishes, it is now men's turn to sing, while women reply in a musical chorus. This goes on for some time, when again the drums resound; the countryside echoes and re-echoes with a merry din and the dance starts afresh.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

So they dance on and on in a non-stop manner and may not finish before two days.

This dance may also take place as a mark of joy when volunteers help a Santal farmer who has no helping hand to aid him in his agriculture. According to custom, such help is always extended, and the farmer entertains the co-villagers at a thanksgiving party when "Dòñ" is danced after a liberal drink of rice-beer.

One who studies the "Dòñ" dances cannot but be struck by the fact that the suggestive hip and body movements, special to the dance, can have only one meaning viz. recreating in artistic forms the human urge to procreation. The very object of the dance, associated as it is with marriage ceremonies, was stated by an old Santal to be a form of magic, where the married pair might unite in love and affection and get children so that the Santals might increase in number.

Jhikà ènèc'

"Jhikà" is the closing item in a dance programme, just following "Dòñ". After a "Jhikà," the dance closes automatically.

Here men and women form a circle, but they do not entwine the hands. The musicians, as before, form an inner circle. The dancers take two

3t Mukherjea C, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

535 long steps forward, and next they move back with two steps of a shorter nature. It is a fascinating sight to see the ebony beauties bending their bodies half, and swinging up and down with a graceful lithe motion like a field of corn before the wind.

533 535 The *joie de vivre* knows no bounds. Kettle-drums, cymbals and flutes fill the atmosphere with a jocund din, while the dance goes on for fifteen minutes with men singing and women replying in chorus.

Jàtur ènèc'

796 535 The time for this dance is the Harvest Festival (Sòhrae) and the Flower-Festival (Baha), when the village-priest offers oblations to the deities of the Holy Grove at day time. Men dance separately in a circle outside the circular female group. The dancers take two steps forward, bend the knees and gracefully raise their folded hands. Next, they turn two steps backwards and swing the hands up and down in a parallel fashion. So they dance on till the completion of the ceremonies in the afternoon, men singing and women replying in chorus.

796 782 535 This is a purely devotional dance, in course of which, the dancers salute the gods of the Holy Grove, because they have given the Santals a bumper harvest (as during the *Sòhrae*, December Harvest

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

Home) or because there are promises of a beautiful spring ahead (as during the *Baba*, Spring festival). The object of the dance is that should such dances take place, the tribe will have agricultural prosperity, children will have good health, diseases will not attack the Santals and there will be an all-round welfare to the village. So it is customary for the Santal to promise a *Jàtur* dance to the deity, in case of apprehended calamities as cholera or other epidemics.

796 782 535

Riñja ènèc'

The afternoons of "Gamah-Purnima' are the occasions for the dance known as Riñja. The youths and maids of the tribe form two separate circles, with musicians in the centre of each. The dancers do not inter-lock the hands, and each member dances singly in response to the melody sung. The "Riñja" has eight particular movements, and one sees the dancers making a circular movement with the hands raised sometimes, while the left hand swings gracefully. So the dance goes on, and the circular motions, backwards and forwards, draw applause from the spectators.

535 796

"Riñja" is danced during "Karam Puja," and the object of the dance is to please the deities so that Santals may have prosperity in this material world.

796 782 535

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

535 796 789 world. Various magical and imitative suggestions can be noticed in "Riñja" dances. Thus agricultural implements are represented by movements suggesting a smith hammering. Other movements show the dancers cutting jungles, giving a boundary to agricultural plots, milking cows, and even cock-crows are imitated to show that the house-holder should now rise from his bed and go to his field.

796 789 535 [731] It was also stated that the Santals believe that if "Riñja" is not danced during Karam Puja, there will be no rain. In the dance movements, one can see that the dancers swing their right hand up and down, thus magically invoking rain. On other occasions, should a drought be apprehended, "Riñja" may be danced in the village *akhra* (the village dancing-yard) after purifying it with cow-dung and sprinkling *mithi* (a spice). This is undoubtedly a magical process to bring down rain on the earth. [783]

Ḍaṇṭa ènèc'

796 585 The next, "Ḍaṇṭa," is danced during the Harvest Festival (Sòhrae) and is a special preserve of the youths of the tribe. They form two circles with the musicians in the central position. A peculiarity of the dance is that in the beginning they step twice to the right and then twice to the

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

left, as they advance forwards. But when the circles swing backwards, it is with a brisk picturesque

Danta Musicians

movement that they do so. Thus they dance from early morning till mid-day, without any girls as dancing partners.

"Danta" is no independent dance, but is indulged in as a relaxation. Women do not join these dances, as they cannot skip sufficiently as the steps require, and more specially because the songs that accompany the dances are frequently too amorous. Many of these refer to women and a very decent one purports as follows:—

Some boys go to a tank; they catch fish, roast and divide. While they eat the fish thus roasted, they give all the bones to women.

Mention should be made of some special steps of the *Danta* and their probable significance. It is noteworthy that when the dancers in both rows

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1002
AW42 Santal AW42

535 832 change places and meet mid-way, they catch their hands and clasp them as is done by lovers in real life. And then they touch the various parts of the body and embrace as in a flirtation. These suggestive stolen sexual representations perhaps refer to the easy familiarities that the society sometimes permits between the husband's younger brother and the elder sister-in-law, (Ḍhàulià sàgài) and between the husband and his wife's younger sister. In making this suggestion, we are fortified by the opinion of an educated Santal.

[607]

Ḍahar ènèc'

535 [221] This dance takes place sometimes between the first day after the new moon of "Magh" (Jan.-Feb.) and the full moon of Falgun (Feb.-Mar.), beginning with evenings and ending with mid-nights.

Gay men and women form a circle with their hands entwined, the musicians standing in the centre. One sees the circle taking two steps forwards, and then changing the direction to the left with one step, and next to the right again with a single step. The circle thus moves on and on in the dreamland of a moon-lit night. Men sing and women reply jointly. And so it goes on for about ten minutes. After a short rest, teasing belles sing again. The circles are formed again automatically and the dance proceeds afresh, while the

[533]

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

musicians display their skill to the admiring by-standers. 535

This is a religious dance and a prelude to the forthcoming Flower Festival (*Baha*). The songs are also devotional and refer to the deities of the Holy Grove. [533]

Baha ènèc'

As its name signifies, this is danced during the *Baha* (flower festival), when on the second day, men and women of the tribe go to the Holy Grove (Jahèrthan) to accompany the village priest, out to invoke the deities there. [796]

This is also a devotional dance, in which only women take part. They do not inter-lock their hands, form no circles, but proceed in a tripping marching order with musicians in a separate group. As they go on, men sing and women reply in chorus. It is picturesque to see the dancers waving their right hands upwards, up to the shoulders, which are swung down soon to be folded beautifully. When the right hand is raised, the right foot takes a step. Next advances the left foot, and the folded hands are raised up with a devotional beam in their eyes. So they go on till they reach the Holy Grove and thus dance round it thrice.

Baha is also danced when the village priest returns home with the flowers on the final day of the flower festival (*Baha*).

Sr Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1002
AW42 Santal AW42

2. Carrion should not be eaten. The signatories refer to this custom with feelings of shame.

3. Santals should not dance or sing anywhere except in their houses or villages. The manifesto reminds the tribe that the Europeans, Hindusthanis, the eastern hill-tribes sing and dance, but they avoid the hill-sides and public places. The ancient Santals had no public dancing.

4. Force should not be resorted to without reason as it slackens the marriage tie and gives rise to various vices.

5. Santals should wear coarse cloth and their women should give up wearing glass-bangles.

During my last visit to Mayurbhanj, I found the air thick with these ideas, specially among the educated Santals and there was a noticeable tendency to give up dancing and singing in public. It became clear to us that aboriginal sets of value and philosophy of life were undergoing a perceptible change. Times are gone when the tribes joined with the rest of the population in their pujas and festivals as in the past. To a discerning eye, this ban has robbed the tribes of the *joie de vivre* to a great extent and the infiltration of political ideas plus a realisation of their rather poor economic life, has cast a pall of gloom even on the denizens of forests, hill-tops and wide expanses of laterite soil,

Sri Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1952
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

cing—all these vanish as of no importance on the arrival of the true he-man.

We questioned the Santals to find out if the capacity to dance brings in erotic energy. They replied that with long continued dance, the body gets tired and sexual energy is diminished, but in mixed dances with women, they feel gradually more and more invigorated.

At this stage, it may be worth-while to note how does the Santal woo. It was gathered that when a youth sees a maid and she catches his fancy, he speaks about his love to his *bili* (elder brother's wife) or *gòròm* (grand-mother), either real or so by village-courtesy. The women belonging to these grades of relationships are very obliging to assist lads in love, and as go-betweens, they meet the girl in question and inform her of the boy's fascination for her, not forgetting to please her by making presents of hàṇḍia, khòi (fried-rice), clothes or money in the name of the lover. The girl thus won over, she mentions a date and place when her lover may meet her in secret, say in a jungle or on the way or back to a *hat* (market). Even illicit love for a married man is arranged in this manner. Such kinds of love lead mostly to marriages by consent of parents as we have already seen in the chapter on marriage. In Mayurbhanj, at present, about eighty percent of marriages are arranged by parents

Bi Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

being as it is, intimacy is never left unwatched and unquestioned. Their wives and daughters may dance with any Santal at day time, but at night no decent girl will dance except in the company of her father or husband. It is only the flirt, the divorcee or the widow who dances unaccompanied by their elders. Some Santals asserted that wives should dance with their husbands only and never with others, but enquiry revealed that custom lays down no such strict injunction and married couples may dance together or with different partners, but there is the sane restriction that the husband must be present at the dancing-yard. It was stated that the husband and wife may suspect each other if either of them dances with others. So business, relationship and bonafides play their reasonable part in determining whether suspicion should attach to the movements of men and women and if the reasons why two persons of the opposite sexes are meeting together are clear, Santal men and women do not bother their heads with any jealous speculation.

Sexual freedom with the Santals has its own border-line. In course of the previous chapters we have seen that the unmarried boy and girl are sexually free, provided that they do not violate the laws of exogamy and prohibited degrees. So it happens that should a lad be found cohabiting, say, with five girls, he will be simply asked by his elders to make

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1952
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

Boy: The silver ornaments on your wrists, 583
the bracelets of silver on my hand, 533
We shall give to the ferry-man; even then we 539
two shall go away to foreign countries.

The Dawn of Romance

It may be interesting at this stage to record the 832
evidence of a middle-aged Santal, who in reply to 836
our questions gave a detailed description of the [124]
dawn of love and its working in the hearts of Santal boys and girls, although, we are afraid, there will be some overlapping in the treatment of the subject.

He said, "The first thing that a Santal boy and girl have when meeting together is, what is called, "Bepengeee kusi" (the meeting of the eyes, *Cakshu Priti*, as termed in Sanskrit). Being thus attracted by the eyes, they have two or three glances when they arrive at an understanding. The boy wants to meet the girl who could fascinate him thus." He corroborated that a medium is now selected by [602] the boy, being either his grand-mother, elder brother's wife or an aunt, real or by village-courtesy, and presents are conveyed with his messages of love. "The meeting," he added, "may take place at dances like the "Lagre," when the infatuated [535] youth goes behind the circle where his beloved is dancing and stretches forth his right hand forward,

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

832 836 535 which is a sign of request for a dance. The knot, where the hand has been stretched, breaks up and allows him to seize the hands of the girl of his choice. Should the understanding be deeper, the boy simply approaches the group and stands; the girl's eyes meet the boy's and she allows him to catch her hands. If the boy is not liked, the girl does not allow him to dance—he has no right to force his presence. Such dances motivate sexual stimulation. Those who desire sexual intercourse, press the wrists of the girl partner. Breasts are also touched and pressed as dancing proceeds with talks of love."

832 836 He gave us a very realistic description of the very first meeting of the lovers. Supposing a lad is at a field. A girl is gathering edible leaves. She catches his fancy. The boy takes up a pebble or a flower and throws it towards the girl. The girl feels surprised and exclaims, "Who threw it?"

The boy pleads, "I don't know. Something fell there."

The girl retorts, "I saw you throwing it. Nobody else was here so long. Who could have done it?"

Both of them then smile automatically and with it comes the understanding. The girl

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (cal. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

224 trouble or games may not be at all available. Should
782 such misfortunes befall the tribe, a *Jhumpar* takes place in which the village deities and *Buru Boṅga* are invoked and represented by the hunters. Sal-
[824] leaves are woven to represent winnowing-fans. Leaves of *meral* (A small tree, *Phyllanthus Emblica*, Linn.) are substituted for sun-dried rice and rubbed on the
224 winnowing-fan. Three men fall in a hypnotic trance
782 and impersonate Maraṅ Buru, Jahèrera and Mònṛén-
787 ko. The fourth, Buru Boṅga, remains at a distance. These gods are asked for the reasons of the calamities, invoked to suggest remedies to get rid of the trouble, whereupon, the appropriate answers are received.

224 The night of the Gipitic' is spent by the Santals with a great deal of mirth and hilarity. Music, dance and feasts go on till sun-rise. The songs sung on the occasion are called Bir seren and several of them have been quoted in the appendix on sex-life. It will appear therefrom that they are of an erotic nature and we gathered that the prevailing atmosphere becomes too much to be stood by the women who assemble to sell rice-beer and they fly from the
[535] spot. Men dance the *Doṅgeṛ*, a dance meant for men only.

224 *Customs and Beliefs connected with Hunting*
787 While out for hunting, if the Santals see a pitcher full of water within the boundary of the village,

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

checks the free passage of an air current. The note produced can be varied within harmonic limits by the action of the lips. The Santals have string instruments also. In their instrument only one string is used which is of gut. The frame-work of it consists of a box-like resonator, hollowed out and covered with goat skin. This goat skin is fixed to it by means of small pins of bamboo. The string is attached at one end to the neck and at the other to the distal end of the resonator. The string has a tuning peg and a wooden bridge for regulating its tension. The dancing-drum (Tumdak) has a slightly conical body of burnt clay; the body is covered with patches of strips of bullock-hide wound tightly round it; both ends are covered with skin, the broad end generally with bullock-hide, the narrow end with the skin of goat. Both ends are laced with strips of bullock-hide, stretched from end to end close together. These strips make the instrument much stronger, and they are placed close together to prevent the clay body from being easily touched The ends are given a rim of boiled rice spread over the surface in circular form, often painted black with a red and white ring outside. The Tumdak is carried over the shoulder in leather thongs, the broad end always to the left side. It is drummed with the hands, the broad end with the left hand and the narrow end with the right hand.

534 [533] [237] [323] [237] [531] [482]

Dancing :- The Santals love dancing very much and every evening the boys and maidens gather on a reserved open space in front of Jog-manjhis house for dancing. Males and females both dance together, though at times they dance separately. The maidens during dancing smooth and adjust their long hair and

535 [301] [302]

535 [80] [302] [114] fix flowers in their coiffure and over the ear. The males also tie peacock's feather on their foreheads. I am now describing the dancing of the maidens which I saw personally in front of Katikund bungalow, which is fifteen miles from Dumka. The maidens stand closely in a line in order of height. They then fall away sidewise to form a big semicircle, limbs all moving as if they belong to one creature. They move forward two or three steps and in the same fashion they move backward and at the same time they make a circular [533] movement. The dancers in the ring sing songs all the while to the music of the flute. Three or four men take their stand in the centre of the ring, beating Tum tum and semi-circular drums furiously.

796 535 **Dancing during Baha festivals**:- Their dancing at the time of Baha festivals is different from that described above. They stand in a line the tallest first and the shortest last, then they bend down and each one raises and lowers both hands. In this way they move forward [533] two or three steps and again come back. As above the dancers in the line sing songs, drumming and fluting goes on all the while.

535 **Dancing in which both male and female take part**:- Both maidens and youths decked with flowers and peacock's feathers hold hands so that the breasts of the girl touch the back of the man next to her, going round in a great [533] circle. The dancers sing in tune to the music of drums and flutes played by the musicians in the centre of the circle.

859 178 **Games**:- In old days there was more play and less work for Santal children. But now-a-days they have to go with their parents to the fields and do their share

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

over a wide field, involving inheritance, marriages and instances of indiscipline. Members are allowed to appeal against decisions made in village councils. Punishments inflicted range from outcasting to fines, and crude punishments are sometimes exacted on the spot, as in a case of a youth who had transgressed the rules of behaviour towards a woman relative with whom he was not in a joking relationship. He was compelled to drag his nose along a line of urine provided by the village headman whose authority had been flouted. The hearing of cases continues till the small hours of the morning and the discussions appear interminable, with accusation and counter-accusation, the calling of witnesses and references to tribal law and custom. It is, however, one of the great educating and cementing institutions in the life of the tribe. It is known to them by the name of "high court", a name that has been naturalized in most Indian languages. It is also called the *sendra dugup'*, the hunt sitting, and the *lo bir dugup'*, the burnt forest sitting, the latter name being due to the fact that the hunt takes place when the undergrowth in the forest has been burnt to help the fertilizing of the soil.

Meanwhile, when the evening meal is over the young men gather in another part of the clearing and spend the night in revelry. There is much strong liquor in evidence. In some cases the place of meeting has become the site of a government liquor shop. The dances, of a class known as *doiger*, are men's dances, and the songs, known as *bir*, or forest songs, are men's songs. They are frankly coarse and deal largely with the physical aspects of love, courtship and lust. Many of the songs that are sung on this night are never sung by the Santals in any mixed company, or, indeed, at any other time, a fact that indicates among them a standard of delicacy in sexual behaviour which certain modern schools of thought appear at times to deny to primitive people.

Towards morning some of the folk, young and old, rest for an hour or two of much-needed sleep, but when the sun has risen they take some breakfast and begin to disperse. They make their way to their own villages, hunting as they go; but on this second day the proceedings are apt to be unexciting, for they do not find much to kill. By late afternoon the men are home again with their spoils, and when these have been divided they work off their fatigue in sleep.

The supposed monotony of the struggle for a livelihood is broken by so many devices of nature and of man that it is

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER 4

DANCING, MUSIC AND POETRY

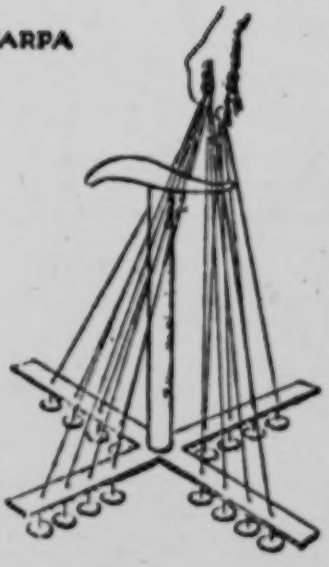
THE word *raska*, meaning "pleasure", is often on the lips of the Santals, and it is dear to their hearts. They turn from their difficulties and sorrows to find solace in one or other of the many ways in which they can experience *raska*. Among these dancing is one of the most important. Their word for dancing is the same as that used for the play of children—*cuce'*—and dancing is indeed the play of the tribe. In every village there is a dancing floor, an open space that is well cared for. At festival times it is swept and freshly plastered with cowdung by young unmarried girls, and when it is not in use for dancing it is the place where the young men gather in the evenings to discuss their affairs and interests.

Some of the dances are connected with particular festivals, and they are performed only at those times or during the whole of the month in which the festival takes place. There are other dances that are suitable at any time during the year. Some are dances for women alone and others for men alone, while in a few both men and women dance. The chief element of variety is introduced by means of varying the rhythm; to the casual observer most of the dances look the same. A group of men or of women dance together, forming a line with their arms linked, stepping sideways or forward and then backward, keeping time to the beating accompaniment of the drums, moving either in a circle or from one side of the dancing-floor to the other, and from time to time breaking out into song. Whenever there is an occasion for rejoicing there will be dancing. It is much in evidence during the celebrations and ceremonies after the birth of a child or at his fuller reception into the tribe, and again during marriage festivities. The general type of dance on all these occasions is known as *don*, which has within it many variations. At these times it is the women who do the dancing, while the men furnish an accompaniment with drums and flutes, and many of the songs refer directly to the purpose for which the folk have gathered together. During marriage ceremonies the *bapla*, or type of dance specifically associated with marriages, is also in evidence. The *doŋger* is the dance of the men on the night of the annual hunt. It is a wild type of dance, when there is much leaping in the air. Two of the young men stripped of clothing dance about in front of the lines, and the

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

• 535
[224]
[881]

SARPA



796
534
[192]

dances are preceded and ended by the shouting of obscene words. The Spring and the Harvest festivals possess their own cycle of songs and dances. During the latter the women make use of a musical instrument known as the *sarpa*, which is brought out only at this time. It is a percussion instrument that consists of a vertical pole about fifteen inches high fixed into two crossed horizontal pieces of wood. Holes are bored in the foot-long horizontal pieces, and through these holes pass lengths of string to the end of which are attached small circular wooden clappers. With the handle at the top of the vertical pole in the left hand and the upper end of the strings held in the right hand, the clappers can be drawn up sharply against the wooden bars, so producing a ringing sound. The workmanship of the *sarpas* varies; some are plain, while others display a handle carved in the shape of a dove and geometrical designs on the horizontal bars. The dancers form two lines; the older women form a line in front and sing and dance with their arms linked. Behind them comes a line of younger women, some of them beating the *sarpas*, some with small brass cymbals, while the two women at the ends of the line wave the end of their *saris* to fan the others.

[535]

534
[912]
[805]

The *buáṅ*[1] is a musical instrument associated particularly with the month that precedes that in which the Harvest festival is celebrated. This is the month known as *Dásdé*, from the Hindi word *dasserah*. The *buáṅ* belongs to a type of musical instrument with a wide distribution in different parts of the world. Its prototype existed when men first plucked the strings of their bows in order to hear a pleasing sound. To the arc of the bow a large hollow gourd is attached, and this adds resonance to the sound of the plucked bow string. The gourd is

[1] See illustration opposite.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

decorated with paper streamers. One of the songs sung to the accompaniment of the *buaṅ* is in honour of the instrument itself and recounts the birth and growth of the gourd on the manure heap. Some of the dances enact hunting scenes and fights with bow and arrow.

During weddings and festivals the dancing takes place at night as well as in the daytime. Drink is plentiful, and the dance goes on until the moon is setting and the first light of morning appears in the sky. At these times dancing is associated with romance as well as with illicit flirtations and unions; amid the general rejoicing it is easy for couples to slip away unnoticed. Dancing, however, is not by any means confined to the more formal and set occasions. During the hot season in particular there is an almost nightly gathering in some part of the village, when the younger members of the community dance together. At these times the *lagre*, a simple dance, is much used. Of this there are many variations, and different varieties appear to be popular in different localities. One of the most popular in the area is a variety of *lagre* known as *porob*, which appears to be unknown elsewhere. These dances are suitable for any occasion.[1]

Santal music is largely but not entirely associated with dancing. The Santals are a musical people and find in music an outlet for the emotional and imaginative sides of their nature. From an early age boys begin to play on a whistle, the high and plaintive notes of which can be heard coming from the fields and woods as the boys tend the herds. Later most of them become proficient in playing the flute. The name *tirio* is used to denote different kinds of flute as well as the boys' whistle. Flutes contain six holes, and the usual type is the true flute that is held to one side—the instrument associated with Krishna in Hindu mythology. Some are beautifully made. One man playing at Sarenga during the Lakshmi Puja had a beautiful specimen; at the higher end there was a brass figure of Krishna playing the flute, while at the other end there was mounted a brass dove. Another type is shaped like an inverted T, the air being blown into the base of the T, while the arms,

[1] Bodding's *Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 331, lists thirty-one dances.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 43]

3a Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

which are longer than the base, contain the finger-holes. Another instrument in the use of which many of the men are proficient is the *banam*,[1] a one-string fiddle. The bowl is hollowed out from a piece of wood or formed sometimes from half a coconut, and it is usually covered with goat skin, though occasionally there are specimens covered with monkey skin, which is prized for the purpose. The bowl is pressed against the player's armpit and the bow is drawn across the string with the right hand, while the fingers of the left hand depress the string at the required point. The string of the fiddle is in these days generally a metal wire. The whole instrument is about eighteen inches long. It is a difficult instrument from which to produce a melody, and it is therefore used chiefly to accompany men's songs with a somewhat monotonous form of "seconds".

The most conspicuous of the musical instruments of the Santals, both for size and volume of sound, are the drums. The two kinds in common use are played together. They are known as the *tumdak'* and the *ṭamak*.[2] They are beaten at dances by the younger men, who drum and leap about in front of the lines of dancing women and girls. The *tumdak'* is made of burnt clay and is somewhat conical in shape. The narrow end is usually covered with goat skin and the wide end with bullock hide. These end coverings are kept in place by narrow leather strips running the length of the drum, and other strips are wound round the drum. It is suspended by thongs from the shoulders of the youth who is playing it. He beats out the main rhythm with his right hand on the narrow end, and the left hand beats a deeper note on the broad end to punctuate the bars. The *ṭamak* is a kettle-drum made of iron in the shape of a bowl and covered with bullock hide. In addition to being used as an accompaniment for the *tumdak'*, it is also the hunting drum. It is slung from the shoulders of the player and beaten with a pair of sticks. A variant of the *ṭamak* is the *leṛa*,[3] which has a flat bottom. The *ḍhāk*[4] is a large long drum hollowed out of wood. This drum is in popular use at weddings and also at large dancing gatherings. It has to be carried by two men and is slung from a bamboo pole which they carry on their shoulders. It is the reverberations of this drum which can be heard throughout the surrounding countryside.

With the exception of the *sarpa* and the cymbals, women do

[1] See illustration opposite.
[2] See illustration opposite.
[3] See illustration opposite.
[4] See illustration next page.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

not learn to play any of these instruments. Young girls may be seen sometimes trying out their brothers' instruments, but they put them away with childish things. Their singing is, however, their peculiar glory. Not only do they sing while dancing, but on many other occasions. As the women of a village return home in the evening from their visit to the weekly market or after a day of gathering leaves in the forest, their high- and soft-toned singing can be heard coming over the fields. During the transplantation of the rice seedlings they sing as they bend over their task. Their songs during this activity are of a special class known as *kephet'*, a word which means the plucking of the seedlings and weeding. Men also sing, and when one is narrating the traditions of the tribe or relating a story he will often break into song to illustrate a point or amplify the story. Santal melodies are as a rule pitched high and in a minor key. The range of the tunes is meagre and rarely makes use of more than three or four different notes in the scale. One unfailing characteristic is a long-drawn-out succession of repeated single notes at the end of each line. Nevertheless, they afford scope for the expression of the dominant emotions experienced by the Santals, whose devotion to dancing and song has developed among them a high degree of musical aptitude. In order that they may easily and quickly memorize the great number of different rhythms with which they have to be familiar, they have invented a series of mnemonics which they repeat at the opening of a dance or a song. One example of such mnemonics, associated with the *doṅ* dances, is as follows:[1]

"Bhendaṅ netaṅ | dak' taṅ netaṅ | din dupuṅ | din dupuṅ—
bhendaṅ netaṅ | dak' taṅ netaṅ | dak' dupuṅ | dak' dupuṅ."

[1] Bodding's *Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 112.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER 9

FESTIVALS

The two great village festivals take place in the spring and after the harvest. The name of the former, *Baha*, means "Flower festival". It is held after the full moon in the month of *Phalgun* (February-March). The hot season is about to begin, sap is rising in the trees, and the *sarjom* is resplendent with blossom and tender green leaves. Until the festival has taken place the women do not gather the *mahkom* blossoms which provide them with both food and drink. It is held on different days in different villages so that the celebrations can be accompanied by a round of visits to relatives. The opening day of all festivals is a day of purification, known as "bathing day". On this day at the time of the Spring festival two temporary sheds are put up in the sacred grove and the young men carry out a hunt in the woods near the village. The priest completes his preparations and bathes certain articles in the waters of the village tank. At sunset three hens are taken to his house by the villagers, who remain there to dance. Three of the young men become spirit-possessed. One impersonates the "Five", another the Old Lady of the Sacred Grove, and the third takes the part of *Marak Buru*; they seize the implements which the priest has purified earlier in the day and make play with them. The priest receives them with respect; he washes their legs and, addressing the spirits, he asks for good fortune during the coming year. When this is over the young men are recalled to their senses by a series of sharp taps on their backs. Dancing is continued throughout the night in the village street just outside the priest's house.

In the early afternoon of the following day the priest is accompanied by the villagers in a singing procession to the sacred grove. On arrival there the same young men are again possessed and run away across the fields, being chased and brought back by the rest of the young men. The priest now assumes an attitude of great humility towards them. He receives them with a cloth tied round his neck in token of the submission of the village to the spirits. The hens are sacrificed and cooked in a hash with rice. The priest and his wife partake of one and the men of the village consume the rest of the food, after which everyone returns home except the priest. He has to remain in the grove until the young men return to escort him. He is then taken to every house in turn and received with great honour. His feet are

5t Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

the *Sakrat*. At this time offerings are made to the ancestors in each house, and the celebration is accompanied by a display of stick dancing, which has replaced the former "sword and shield" dance. At the end of the following month the *Mag Sim*, the hen at the end of the month of *Mag*, is offered. In former times the village officials used to resign at this time and could be either replaced or reappointed, but the only relic of the old practice that has survived is that the headman has to treat the whole village to beer. Contracts with servants are renewed during the festival, and they receive the cloth that is always a part of the contract. In connection with rice cultivation there is the *Erok' Sim*, the hen that is offered at the time of sowing, and *Nawai*, when the first fruits of the first rice crop are offered in the sacred grove. Before this takes place the new rice must not be eaten. The village priest cuts the first handful of the crop and offers some at the foot of each of the chief trees. A sprig is also tied round the trunk of the trees and remains there. While the prayer is being said, milk is poured on the offering. After the priest has done his part, similar offerings are made in every house to the house spirits and the ancestors, the rice being taken from the crops belonging to the family. In varying degrees the Santals share in some of the festivals and practices of the low-caste cultivators around them. In the early monsoon days, during the period of *Rohini*, which is an auspicious time for sowing rice, they make a mark round their houses with cowdung as a protection against snakes. The snake goddess festival occurs in late August, and although its observance is not widespread among the Santals there are some local celebrations, especially when there is an *ojha* in the village. The *ojhas* all keep this festival, and others go to them at this time to ask for medicines against snakebite. Some Hindu festivals, as we have seen, furnish the occasion for large gatherings of Santals. At Sarenga, in addition to the Lakshmi Puja, a somewhat smaller gathering takes place during the hot weather in connection with the celebration of the Siva Gajon at a local temple. At this time the Charak, or hook-swinging festival, otherwise known as the *Pata*, takes place. The practice has almost died out within the last fifteen years. It had been prohibited by the government, but as long as the old generation, which was accustomed to the practice, remained it continued with gradually diminishing fervour. The Santals gather now to sing and to dance. They also join the throngs of pilgrims, sightseers and traders who collect at the Bogri *mela*, or fair,

Sc Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

58 852 been a second marriage, and as they were extremely poor their plea to set up house together had been allowed and the marriage celebration that had been postponed was indefinitely suspended. The time came when they wished to arrange a marriage for their eldest son and they found themselves involved in a difficulty. Until the formal celebration of their own marriage had taken place their son could not marry because in its absence they could not carry out the *caco chaṭiar* of their boy. The problem was solved by going through one of the permitted forms of marriage themselves, after which on the same day they performed the initiation of their three sons. They were scolded by the villagers who gathered for the occasion, but again pleaded their poverty.

852 574 The whole of the population of the village is invited for the ceremony, and each person must at the very least be given two cups of beer for each child on whose behalf the ceremony is being held. The feast for the whole village is not practicable except for a very few, and it is regarded as sufficient if the village officials are presented with a meal of rice and meat or chicken curry. If possible, the midwife who presided at the birth of the children bathes them in the courtyard by pouring water over them; and if she cannot, this is done by one of the old women present. [538] [624] Water is also sprinkled over the assembled guests. The *jog-māṇjhi* recites the myth of Santal origins; beginning from the account of the creation of the world and the founding of the clans, he brings the story up to date by leading to the birth of the children in the particular family with which the villagers are at • [535] that moment concerned. Then there follows a dance in the [533] courtyard, and songs are sung in honour of the family. The event is neither preceded nor followed by any period of instruction. [184] Such materials as exist for comparing the institution in different parts of the Santal country suggest that possibly its observance is of greater importance in the north, particularly in the Santal 114 Parganas. Bodding has described the ceremony, basing his 852 account on the published Santali account of the traditions.[1] Recently a long and full account of the ceremonial has been published in Santali, and this account comes from the same area but does not include a description of an actual observance.[2] On the other hand, Mr. C. L. Mukherjea's account of Santal culture to the extreme south in the state of Mayurbhanj[3] omits all

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 132]

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Santali Dictionary*, Vol. I, p. 413.
[2] Stephen H. Murmu, *Karom or Caco Chaṭiar*, Dumka, 1945.
[3] C. L. Mukherjea, *The Santals*, Calcutta, 1943.